

## BLACK BEAR SHOOTING IN KASHMIR

By E. Hubert Litchfield

**D**URING the spring of the year 1900, just after an unsuccessful hunt after tigers in the jungles of the terai near Dehra Dun, D. and I started for a flying trip to Kashmir, more with the idea of seeing the justly celebrated Vale than with the expectation of getting any shooting. After a tiresome trip of two hundred miles in a jiggly tonga from Rawal Pindi, made in the fast time of two days, we arrived at Srinagar, the capital of Kashmir, a town which once held the honored reputation of being the dirtiest place on the face of the earth, but which now, thanks to, the superhuman efforts of the street-cleaning department, holds only second place, with, however, the chance of remaining there for many years to come.

There are three varieties of bear commonly met with in the Indian Empire: the Himalayan black bear (*Ursus torquatus*, or *Ursus tibetanus*); the Himalayan snow bear (*Ursus isabillinus*), and the sloth bear of the plains (*Ursus labiatus*). The last is the common bear of India, being found all the way from Mysore to the foot of the Himalayan Mountains. The first two are confined chiefly to the Himalayas, and are indigenous to Nepal and Kashmir. The black bear is essentially a forest-loving animal, and probably is never found at a greater elevation than twelve or thirteen thousand feet. It is very fond of fruit, corn or maize, but will kill sheep and cattle if it gets the chance. In its forages for food it naturally meets man very often, and for this reason is not shy in the least. On the contrary, it will invade a native's corn field when the maize is ripe and actually gather the mulberries from the trees along the regular highways. In

this love of fruit, as in many other respects, it resembles our own black bear; yet there is one great difference, our black bear is naturally a coward, and will run at the sight of a man, while the Kashmir variety, if in the mood, will move out of the road for nobody, and has been known many times to attack and kill without provocation. It is deep black in color, with a white V-shaped mark on its chest, and a white lower jaw. The hair, even in winter, is not very thick, so the pelt does not make a very



BY "TONGA" TO KASHMIR.

valuable trophy. The head is short and rather round, and the eyes are small. The claws, being short and strong, are well adapted to climbing. Individuals of this species vary considerably in size, ranging anywhere from five feet to seven feet in length, though occasionally an old bear will grow even larger. The female is usually much smaller than the male.

This is the bear whose pelt I sought to carry off to America. My battery consisted of a .303 double barrel express, and a

double .577 express, so I felt equal to meeting anything. The .303 was chambered to shoot the regular English military cartridge with soft-nosed bullet, while the .577 shot 170 grains of black powder and a 450-grain hollow bullet. I had tried without success to get cartridges loaded with the solid bullet, fearing that the hollow express would break up on striking the larger bones of a bear. And my experience justified my fears. I lost two bears which I undoubtedly would have secured had I used the solid bullet.

Through the kindness of Col. Ward and Mr. Cobb, I was enabled to obtain a good shikari (hunter), an intelligent-looking Kashmiri of about thirty-five years, a cook, a servant and the necessary camp outfit. The size of my tent, and the extent of my camp furniture would make one of our western hunters smile, but in India one requires a large tent, with fly, and many other comforts on account of the terrific heat. All baggage is carried by coolies who manage a sixty-pound load without difficulty, averaging fifteen miles in the day, up hill and down. An ordinary "bunderbust" (outfit), for two men will be about ten coolies; you pay these men four annas (eight cents) the march, so you can afford to have quite a following and many luxuries in the way of extra baggage, which the price of transportation in this country would prohibit.

I had been advised to go up the Liddar valley, where bear were said to be plentiful. This valley lies about fifty miles south of Srinagar, and is one of the regular routes to Ladakh. The mountains, heavily wooded in some places, rise on each side to a maximum height of about 17,500 feet, averaging probably nine or ten thousand feet. These mountains are furrowed with ravines called nullahs, and it is in these nullahs that the bears are found. They come down from the mountains at night, get their food in the valley near some village, and retire to the dense jungle during the day. Your best plan is to send men to the neighboring villages after information of bear; having secured which you hasten to the locality, arrange your "bunderbust," and try a "hank" (drive). The game laws only permit driving with men and dogs between May 15 and October 15. At other times you must still hunt; sometimes you can get a shot by watching the corn fields and surprise bruin as he is on his way

from breakfast; very often success attends a night walk among the mulberry trees, where the bear may be feasting. For this, however, you need moonlight, and you must have your handkerchief or some other white object tied around the muzzle of your rifle as a guide in sighting.

After a beautiful trip of two days up the Jehlum river on a houseboat, I arrived and made camp at Islamabad, a prosperous town at the foot of the Liddar valley. That evening news came of a bear having killed a bullock about fifteen miles up the valley, so early the next morning we started with the owner of the slain bullock as guide. A climb of about 2,000 feet brought us the first day to the scene of the bear's feast, and we pitched camp by a dirty little village, situated in the center of the rice fields at the foot of a range of mountains ranging as high as 15,000 feet. The prospect of employment filled the settlement with joy and I was received in state by the lumbudahr (head man), and the villagers, who assured me that a bear not only had killed the bullock but others had ravaged the nearby corn fields.

My shikari estimated forty beaters to be sufficient, so we selected that number, in addition to three lenders to conduct the line, and started at 4.30 the next morning. The beaters were armed with drums, cymbals, tom-toms, tin cans, in fact with anything on which a noise could be made, their own voices being not the least effective. As for clothing, a "kummerbund" (waist band), and a skull cap constituted their simple, and, for that climate, sufficient outfit. It was arranged that I take my position at the top of the nullah, while the beaters began the drive from the bottom, and walked towards me.

Preceded by a guide, and followed by my shikari, I toiled up the mountain, and hard work it was, especially after the sun had risen and under the heat you began to feel like a baked potato. After two hours I reached the head of a nullah, and surveying the ground carefully with my glass, selected a likely spot, where with my rifles I awaited the drive to begin. My shikari was posted off on my right and another man on the left to drive the bear in toward me if it should try to get out at the side. The forest was so thick in front of me that I could not see clearly more than thirty or forty yards, and the danger

of killing a beater in this kind of cover, where it was snap shooting as the bear momentarily showed himself, made me, I confess, a bit nervous. Very often the bear keeps just ahead of the line of beaters, so that you see them as soon, or even before you see the quarry, thus one must needs keep his head to avoid killing a native. Only the week before my hunt a beater had thus been accidentally killed by an Englishman.

At last the signal was given and immediately followed from far down the mountain by a hideous chorus of yells, whoops, whistles, drumming of the tom-toms, and clashing of the cymbals, as the beaters dashed into the jungle like a pack of fox hounds. A slight breeze carried the noise up the mountain to me, and it sounded as if Bedlam had been let loose.

Gradually, yet it seemed an age, the sounds came nearer and nearer, and now and then I thought I could distinguish words; but though they sounded near, the beaters were still a long way off. The boating of the tom-toms was incessant and sounded stronger or weaker as the coolies passed through thick jungle or patches of clearing. Meanwhile I sat with the .577 in my hands expecting any minute a bear to pop out of the wood in front of me. My position on the sloping hillside not being very secure I had propped myself on the upside of a large tree, that I might take steady aim. Suddenly, above the clamor, which had become terrific, I heard *harput! harput! kubberdar!* which means "bear, bear, look out!" Glancing around the tree I could distinguish two black forms coming up toward me at a lope, now appearing distinctly as they reached a clearing and again disappearing as they rushed through the heavy underbrush. They came on to within about forty yards of me when, probably getting my wind, they swerved to the left. I could then see them fairly well as they lum-

bered along and noted that they were large bears. Picking out a space between the trees past which I saw they must go, I waited till they came in view and then let go with the .577 at the shoulder of the larger, which at the time was about thirty yards away—the smoke preventing my getting in a second shot. At the report I heard a savage



MY SHIKARIS.

grunt and saw the bear rolling over and over down hill toward the beaters, who, in their excitement, kept shouting *lugga* (he's hit)! *maro* (shoot)! *kubberdar*; all this mixed with the loudest kind of yells and cries as they scattered right and left, climbing trees or rocks to keep out of the path of the wounded bear. I had not gone more than one hundred yards in pursuit, when we came to a tree whose blood-covered base showed it to have been the obstacle which had brought the bear to a sudden stop in his down-mountain roll; but he was up and on again. One of the trackers went first, I next with the .577, my shikari following me with my second gun, and then came all the beaters yelling and shouting like madmen. Being unable to

speak the language I could not keep the coolies quiet or drive them off. I was afraid the bear might back-track, spring upon us from behind some bush, and, in the scrimmage that I would shoot somebody. But my attempts at making myself understood were of no use. They would not be left behind.

We followed that bear up hill and down for about a mile and I was beginning to fear it would get away, even though I was sure I had held straight on the brute. At last we came out at the edge of a wooded nullah, and viewed the bear down at the bottom, making his way slowly up through the dense jungle of the opposite side, and looking very sick. I saw at once that if I did not then stop him he would escape, because by the time I could descend and ascend again he would be a long way off. So I decided to risk a shot when the bear again hove in sight. Taking the .303 I sat down on the hillside and waited, the natives all standing around and jabbering like magpies. Once more bruin came in sight and he looked for all the world like a giant fly walking up the window pane across your room. He was about one hundred and seventy-five yards off. I took a fine sight at his nose and slowly pressed the trigger, hoping to break his backbone as he climbed up. The small bullet did its work well, for at the report the bear suddenly came to a standstill, fell backwards, and then rolled over and over down hill till it came up with a crash in the bushes and rocks at the bottom. The result of this shot, as unexpected to my men as it was to me, took the coolies right off their feet. They jumped around waving their arms, rushed up, patted me on the back, calling me an *atcha shikari* (fine shot), and actually tried to kiss me, an operation for which I was not at all eager. At the bottom of the nullah we found the bear wedged between two large boulders growling and trying hard to extricate himself. I saw his backbone was broken, so, crawling around into an advantageous position I gave him his quietus by a bullet through the brain.

It was a very large specimen, about seven feet long and heavy in proportion. My first shot had entered at the left shoulder, but the hollow bullet had broken up on striking the heavy bones, thus only disabling instead of going clear through the way a solid bullet would have done. The second shot had

broken the backbone and made the bear helpless. The last shot had shattered the brain. One lesson I learned right there, viz., that you want a heavy, solid bullet for smashing big bones, the hollow express being only useful against the soft parts of the animal. After the bear had been skinned, and the coolies had smoked the pipe of victory over the carcass, we returned to camp, I, for one, being so tired I could hardly stand after the work in the extreme heat. The news of the hunt had gone before us, and on our arrival, all the women and children were gathered in front of my tent awaiting us. The most interesting part of the day (for the coolies) was now to come. They were drawn up in line and I handed each a four anna piece (eight cents); this, I had been informed, was a handsome reward, sufficient to enable each to live luxuriously for nearly a week.

I hunted nearly every day for three weeks in different parts of the valley, with varying success; sometimes going for days without seeing a bear, and at other times having the bear driven almost within range, only to have it turn back and escape, through bad management on the part of the beaters. I was getting accustomed to the hard work, and had begun to pick up a few words of the language. We had been for several days after a very large bear, which was living near the little village of Eishmakam. I had seen it once in the distance, but repeated drives had failed to dislodge the rascal, who apparently was an old-timer, and fully capable of taking care of himself. The villagers told wonderful tales of his great strength and cunning, and these were corroborated one day when, having cornered him in a nullah, he turned back just as he was about to give me a shot, grabbed one of my beaters, gave him a fierce hug, and then hurled him down hill. The bear then decamped. This had taken place in the jungle just below me, but out of sight. When I climbed down I found the man pretty well used up, being severely bitten in three places and knocked insensible. I thought I would have a large bill of damages to pay the widow, but the man came out all right in a few days, much to my relief, and a little cold cash fully recompensed him for his interview with *Ursus torquatus*.

Finally, one day patience was rewarded. My shikari and I were seated at the top of a nullah, from which we commanded a good view. It was a nullah lined with low

bushes, mixed, here and there, with patches of dense jungle; and the drive had not started five minutes when my shikari grabbed me by the arm, and, pointing down the mountain, whispered *harput, budda barput* (a big bear). I looked just, in time to see a large black object disappear in a patch of jungle about five hundred yards below. Bruin, probably having been in drives before, had decided to vacate before the beaters could get near, so off he started for the top. I could see him gradually coming up, getting larger and larger as he

saw me at all, and so I waited until he was only twenty yards away, and then, slowly taking aim, at the point of his left shoulder, pressed the trigger. As the smoke cleared away, I saw the bear rolling back into the brush, followed by a lot of stones and dirt which he had dislodged in his fall. Down the mountain he rolled, breaking the brush like paper, for about two hundred and fifty yards, when I noted the bushes stop moving. The beaters had scattered right and left, and were now looking out from advantageous positions behind rocks and



MY LARGEST BEAR.

approached. At length he was only one hundred yards away, and had entered a piece of brush which extended up to within about forty yards of where I sat, so I knew that he was bound to come out pretty near me. I could hear the underbrush crash and break as he came up. At last out he came, making for a point a little to my left; and I kept absolutely still, waiting for him to get well within range. He was so intent on getting away from the beaters, whose yells were now terrific, that he never

trees. I hurried down as fast as the nature of the ground would permit, and found that the bear had brought up in a dense piece of thorn and briar bushes about fifteen feet high. The coolies had surrounded this place, and were hurling rocks in the direction of the bear, calling him all sorts of names. Bruin declined to move, only giving vent to his displeasure by repeated grunts and growls. I entered slowly on my hands and knees, and had not gone ten yards when I saw him through the briars rolling his head

from side to side, and evidently hard hit. I crept all around, trying to get a shot at his vitals, but he was so mixed up with the brush that I could not see, and I decided at last to risk a shot, hoping the bear would expose himself. I fired with the .303 at what I thought was his chest, and accomplished my object. Giving a short growl, he struggled up on his hind legs and made for me. This was just the chance I wanted, so I gave him a shot from the .577 right in the V-shaped white mark on his chest. That finished him. We had a hard time getting the bear out, having to cut a regular path with axes; but at last it was done. It was huge for a Kashmir bear, measuring seven feet six inches from nose to tip of tail—the largest

ever shot in that vicinity, the head man told me. My first bullet had entered at the point of the left shoulder, smashing it completely, and had torn its way into the chest; but there it stopped; breaking up into small pieces, as I thought it would. A solid bullet of the same weight would have finished him off then and there. The last shot went through the chest and out at the back. The coolies cut a small tree, slung the bear on with vines, and we started for camp.

I killed several bears after that, but none so large. The weather was by this time getting intensely hot, which made it practically impossible to hunt in the day time, so I decided to break camp, and the end of July saw us homeward bound.

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## AN EASTER OUTING IN FLORIDA

By Lynn Tew Sprague

**T**HOUGH we of the North make much ado about spring, we know her not in all her beauty. With us she is coy, capricious and somewhat lachrymose. She is timidly here to-day; to-morrow she has fled before returning winter. But in the Gulf States she comes suddenly and to stay, with assured, sunny smiles and voluptuous arms full of flowers. By the first of March rose bushes and fruit trees are in bloom, the woods are shimmering with yellow-greens and the intense, delicious, balmy spell is felt in one's very soul. March, with us most disagreeable of months, is there a succession of golden days and odorous promises, and April is what our June is,

"The balmy month of bloom and birds,  
Of song and leafy bowers."

It was an Easter day in late April when my snail-paced mule drew me up before the Major's gate. The dignified old gentleman who was to be my host, I had casually met only a few days before when a quail-hunting trespasser on his acres. He had sat with me on a fallen log in his hummock lands and talked in quaint, stately phrase of old times and old ways in the old South; and on Easter eve an antiquated negro had brought to my hotel, two, miles away, a

note written with the straight, strong strokes our grandfathers affected, which I knew at a glance was from the Major. It briefly asked, "Will you come and dine on the gladdest of holidays, and see how simply an old-time Southerner lives?"

So I had driven away in the soft beauty of the Florida spring morning, along a sandy track that wound and twisted seemingly any whither, like the weird Ocklawaha River, which it skirted, and was now at the Major's home. The courtly old gentleman came down the path to receive me, as though I was a hero spoil-laden from victorious battle, and there was, from that moment, a gracious old-time flavor about all his hospitality that put me altogether at ease. Like nearly everybody in Florida, the Major: has known better days. The great freeze all but ruined him, but he is as erect and uncompromising as the noble old oaks in his yard. His plantation consists of some four hundred acres of sand and pine trees, with perhaps forty acres of rich hummock lands. He has a half dozen old negro servants, who raise a little poor cotton and some vegetables for market; and who cut for the Major some salable cypress timber. Before the destructive freeze, the Major used to ship about a thousand boxes of oranges.